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ABSTRACT

A need exists for a comprehensive inservice teacher education delivery system which: (1) is sequential; (2) is based on identified teacher needs through classroom observations and analysis of unit and daily lesson plans; and (3) promotes professional growth and facilitates the achievement of program goals. A survey conducted by professors with the University of Georgia Teacher Assessment Project identified 14 generic competencies comprising 3 categories: teaching plans and materials, classroom procedures, and interpersonal skills. These competencies formed the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) used in a triad teacher evaluation, conducted by a certified data collector, a building principal, and a peer teacher selected by the teacher being assessed. A personalized synergistic approach to staff development at the local level was developed using the TPAI findings to increase latent teacher competencies. The program was a collaborative effort involving beginning teachers, exemplary teachers selected by the school district as resource persons, and university instructors. After skill needs were identified, instruction was given through small and large group discussion, demonstrations, tutorial exercises, role playing, classroom visits, and resource materials. The resource teachers acted as role models and assisted in classroom observations as well as in the preparation of teaching materials. The 23 teachers who participated in the winter 1981 program successfully demonstrated competency in all areas during the final observation. (FG)

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Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments: A "Personalized" Approach to Staff Development

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Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments:
A "Personalized" Approach to Staff Development

Introduction

Inservice education, long a salient part of the teaching profession, has recently enjoyed renewed attention by school districts and university personnel alike. Declining enrollments, the contemporary call for budgetary restraints and the ever-increasing cry for accountability have placed greater emphasis on continuing professional development with the ultimate goal of producing more effective teachers. Often, the search for inservice activities which promote effective classroom teaching "has been characterized by randomness and fragmentation, by programs that deferred more to expediency than to need."[1] The need clearly exists for subjective and objective evaluations of teacher effectiveness which are more adequately defined and, at the same time, for an inservice delivery system which is more comprehensive in scope.

From an historical prospective, research studies in teacher performance from the 1940's to the 1960's can be grouped into three general categories: (1) trait theory which focuses on what the effective teacher is; (2) behavior theory which focuses on the teacher's behavior style in the classroom; and (3) situational theory which explains the interaction between the teacher and multiple variables found in a classroom setting.[2] More recently, performance-based criteria, identifying elements of teacher effectiveness, have been developed with the idea that predetermined criteria more clearly define teacher competency levels. Strengths of the criteria-based evaluation model lie in the fact that quantitative measures have been developed to assess actual teacher performance on predetermined

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competencies deemed essential to effective instruction. Combining many of the facets of trait, behavior and situational theories, performance-based assessment provides a comprehensive, systematic approach to professional renewal. In order to maximize the outcome of professional renewal and to accomplish the desired goal-of-changing teacher behavior patterns (for the expressed purpose of improving teacher performance levels), a need exists for a comprehensive in-service delivery system which is sequential in scope, based on identified teacher needs through classroom observations and an analysis of both unit and daily lesson plans, and promotes professional growth and facilitates the achievement of program goals.

Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments

Viewing effective teaching as the cumulation of a complex set of variables, (mastery of subject matter, knowledge of essential teaching skills and interrelated principles and the ability to successfully demonstrate said skills and principles') college professors with the University of Georgia Teacher Assessment Project, in conjunction with the State of Georgia Department of Education, developed and field-tested the Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments (TPAI). Designed to measure teaching performance tasks against predetermined numerical standards established by the department of education, the TPAI consists of performance-based criteria developed to assess the degree to which beginning teachers demonstrate those teaching skills deemed crucial to effective teaching. A comprehensive list of identified teacher competencies, compiled through research findings and interviews with

practicing professionals, was forwarded to a random sample of over four thousand Georgia educators for the purpose of identifying those skills thought to be most germane to the instructional process. As a result of this effort fourteen generic competencies, comprising three categories, were identifed and constitute the TPAI: Teaching Plans and Materials (TPM), Classroom Procedures (CP), and Interpersonal Skills (IS).

Because generic competencies are by nature global conceptualizations of reasonable and purposeful performance, they are classified as first-order statements and are, therefore, too general for assessment purposes. More definitive descriptions of teacher behavior were needed to more accurately assess performance. Indicators of sentence-length statements, which are second-order definitions, were subsequently developed and more clearly delineate teaching behavior representative of the competency. Hence, the greater the number of indicators demonstrated by the teacher, the more likely the teacher is to be demonstrating the target competency. Third-order units, suitable for scoring, were developed to describe the quality of the level of performance. Descriptors, also expressed in sentence-length statements, are still more specific than either competencies or indicators and, scored on a scale of 1 through 5, are used to describe the quality of a teacher's performance relevant to a competency indicator.

The Teaching Plans and Materials section of the TPAI contains five competency statements and 15 indicators which focus on the preparation of instruction and are set forth in individually prepared portfolios. Teacher portfolios address specific factors such as plans for instruction (including goal, statements and behavioral objectives), instructional

materials and teaching techniques, and copies of student evaluation instruments. Classroom Procedures, assessing six competencies, has a total of 20 indicators and is cognitive in nature and is classroom-management oriented. Focusing on actual classroom practices, indicators emphasize the use of teaching methods and techniques and communication skills. Interpersonal skills, consisting of three competencies and ten indicators, are affective oriented and concentrate on the teacher's proficiency in creating a comfortable social atmosphere, demonstrating warmth and friendliness and managing classroom interaction.

An example of how competency statements (teaching skills), indicators and descriptors combine to determine the quality of observed teacher performance is illustrated below. Competency VI "Communicates with learners," designates the skill being assessed. One of the three indicators for this skill (competency statements may have more than one indicator), uses instructional materials that provide learners with appropriate practice on objectives, more fully describes teacher behavior. The descriptors which correlate with the indicator are assessable statements with score points for scoring.

Indicator 3. Uses instructional materials that provide learner with appropriate practice on objectives.

Scale of Descriptors

1. Materials chosen are irrelevant to the topic objectives or no materials are used when materials are needed.
2. Materials chosen are related to the topics being studied but not to the objectives.
3. Most materials chosen provide for practice on specific objectives. Some of the practice may be insufficient in quantity to achieve the objectives.

4. Materials chosen are relevant to the objectives. Learners are given ample opportunity to practice the objectives.

5. In addition to the items in 4, formal or informal progress assessment techniques are used to determine whether the practice individual learners receive is sufficient.[3]

Assessment procedures call for a triadic approach to evaluation. A certified data collector, a building principal and a peer teacher (selected by the teacher being assessed) conduct two separate evaluations, one in the fall and one in the spring, of teacher performance relative to the TPAI criteria. Each evaluator rates the first-year teacher on each of the three areas independently, with results being computer scored and reported as mean scores, ranging from 1.00 through 5.00. Mean scores are graphically presented in individual performance profiles with scoring points on each competency and indicator being plotted against a predetermined standard (mean score as the successful level of teacher performance.) Predetermined standards are set by the Georgia State Department of Education.

Personalizing Staff Development

Utilizing a synergistic approach to staff development, the Department of Professional Laboratory Experiences of the University of Georgia developed a "personalized" approach to in-service education conducted at the local level. With the realization that practitioners' time is at a premium, that and instructional content needed to be concise in nature and compact in scope, the department developed a program for the purpose of increasing latent competencies through the combined efforts of local district personnel and university instructors. To facilitate the goal of changing teacher behavior patterns through utilization of

short-term instructional modules, addressing all three assessment areas, each teacher's computer profile was analyzed and a matrix was constructed for the purpose of identifying teacher deficiencies in all three assessment areas.

Teachers were then divided into teams with each team consisting of no more than seven participants. Individual conferences were subsequently conducted by each college instructor to ascertain specific teacher expectations regarding in-service activities and to determine learning styles and modes of instruction which best facilitate learning. As a result of these conferences, both a master schedule and individual teacher schedules were developed and provided to each participant. In an effort to augment the program's effectiveness, central office personnel were asked to identify exemplary teachers interested in serving as peer or resource teachers for an in-service program. Separate schedules were also developed for the resource teachers with supporting instructional activities based solely on the needs of the first-year teacher.

The master schedule called for an initial orientation meeting which preceded seven instructional sessions. Each of the sessions was approximately four hours in length and was conducted on a weekly basis at the local level. The format of each session was similar in that it was three dimensional: (1) target competencies and indicators were reviewed with performance levels being identified; (2) instructional activities were defined and undertaken to remedy skill deficiencies; and, (3) individual assignments were made to reinforce session content and to prepare teacher participants for the following week's session. Individual teacher schedules were more definitive in scope in that they

identified specific learning activities to be addressed and delineated the instructional materials and mode of delivery to be used in strengthening target competencies by session dates. Each learning activity and correlated instructional delivery system corresponded with the discrete learning style of the first-year teacher as originally assessed in the pre-program interviews. Learning modes included large and small groups instruction, group demonstrations, singular tutorial exercises, journal articles and books, video tapes, cassette recordings, role playing and classroom visitations. Names and addresses of both instructor and resource teachers were listed on each teacher's schedule. Evaluation procedures, both formative and summative in nature, provided on-going planned reviews of program activities and continuous monitoring of participant progress toward goal achievement.

Schedules for resource teachers complemented the schedules of the first-year teachers in that session dates and instructional activities in which the resource teacher needed to be involved were directly correlated with those activities which were diagnosed for the beginning teacher. The role of the resource teacher is unique in that each provides continuous support and feedback on a highly personalized, daily basis as first-year teachers proceed through the staff development program. Working in conjunction with the college instructor, resource teachers: (1) provide a role model of appropriate behavior; (2) observe the beginning teacher in actual classroom situations and critiques classroom performance; (3) provide assistance in developing and copies of exemplary materials (lesson plans, student tests, etc.); and (4) confer with both the college instructor and the beginning teacher, on an on-going

basis, regarding observable progress toward meeting predetermined competency standards.

As inservice activities draw to a close, emphasis shifts from remedial efforts to the preparation of the portfolio for the second assessment. At this point, both the resource teacher and the college instructor assist the first-year teacher in areas such as: writing instructional objectives to accomodate a variety of levels of instruction, selecting teaching techniques and instructional materials necessary to accomplish the objectives, organizing classroom activities that account for differences among learners and their unique learning styles, and diagnostic procedures required to identify learners in need of specialists. Individual assistance in preparing the teaching plans and materials section of the TPAI is followed by an interview in which resource teacher and college instructor together review areas of weakness on the classroom procedures and interpersonal skills portion of the instrument. Weak competencies are discussed and, in a role playing situation, are demonstrated at a satisfying level. Finally, teachers whose skill level was assessed to be below the minimum standard were recycled through an abbreviated session. Out of a total of 23 teachers who participated in the inservice activities during the Winter of 1981, all 23 participants successfully demonstrated competency in all assessment areas during the second observation.

As a result of personalizing the instructional program, first-year teachers are provided with an opportunity to develop latent competencies and achieve personnel success through systematic, planned instruction in a field-based setting. Furthermore, by promoting the cooperative

approach to staff development, local school districts increase their commitment to the successful execution of program activities and their sense of responsibility toward beginning teachers by providing opportunities that maximize professional development.

Footnotes

[1]Louis Rubin, "Continuing Professional Education in Perspective," The In-Service Education of Teachers: Trends, Processes, and Prescriptions, ed. by Louis Rubin (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978), p. 9.

[2]John C. Reynolds, "In Search of Mr. (Ms.) Goodteacher," Action In Teacher Education, Vol. XI, No. 1 (Winter, 1979-1980), pp. 35-36.

[3]Charles E. Johnson, Chad D. Ellett and William Capie, An Introduction to the Teacher Performance Assessment Instruments: Their Uses and Limitations, Teacher Assessment Project (Athens: University of Georgia, 1980), p. 3.